

15 April 2022 Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Good Friday Pastor Fraser Pearce

In the book of Acts we hear the account of Philip
Who was led by the Spirit to go to an Ethiopian court official
Who was returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
The Ethiopian man was sitting in his chariot and reading aloud
From the Bible.

In fact, he was reading from the Book of Isaiah,
And from the very chapter which we have read today.
This is what we hear in the book of Acts: **Now the passage of the
scripture that he was reading was this:**

**‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.**

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.’

The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the
prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ Then Philip
began to speak, and starting with this scripture, *he proclaimed to him
the good news about Jesus.*

As Christian people we know, together with Philip,
That the book of Isaiah is speaking about Jesus,
And today, with Philip, I’ll proclaim the Good News about Jesus
From the prophetic words of Isaiah.

This sermon will make three main points from the reading.
The first is that Jesus’ suffering and death reveals our sin:
That is, it shows us that our spiritual situation is worse than we think.
The second is that Jesus suffering and death are vicarious:
That is, Jesus suffered and died *for us; he took our place.*
And the third is that through Jesus’ vicarious suffering and death
We have *healing* and *peace* from God.

OK, let’s go to the first point:

Jesus suffering and death reveal our sin.

This is what we read in Isaiah today:

**He was wounded for our *transgressions*,
crushed for our *iniquities*;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the *iniquity* of us all.**

I'll read this passage out again

As we move to the second and third points,

But notice for now that Jesus' suffering and death

Are the result of our *transgression*

And of our *iniquity*.

We don't use these words much in everyday English

But simply put transgression is rebelling against God

By breaking one or more of his laws,

And iniquity means any offence against God

From willful rebellion to unintentional sins.

Now let's think about what Isaiah is saying:

Jesus' suffering and death show the cost of our sin,

And because the cost is so high

This shows us that our sin is much worse than we think.

We have clues about this sort of reality in life:

In our immaturity, when we think only of ourselves

And don't think what it's like to be someone else,

We can say and do things that are very hurtful and damaging.

We can, in a state of obliviousness, damage property,

Harm reputation, and destroy relationships,

And we can remain in a state of obliviousness until we see

The suffering that we have actually caused,

And the cost in making reparations,

Even if it's as simple as destroying a vase because as kids
We were running in the house where we weren't meant to,
Or something far more serious, like destroying a loving marriage
Through violence or unfaithfulness.
Transgression and iniquity has a cost,
And it cost our Lord Jesus not silver or gold,
But his holy and precious blood.
His death reveals our sin.

But Jesus' death was also *vicarious*: it was *for us*.

Let's listen again to these words from Isaiah:

**He was wounded for *our* transgressions,
crushed for *our* iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
*the iniquity of us all.***

These words from Isaiah make it clear that the Suffering Servant,
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
Was taking upon himself the punishment that we deserved,
He was wounded and crushed for our transgressions and iniquities.

As Christian people we understand that Christ was doing
What we could not do: paying the cost for our sins.
Again there are clues to this in life,
Because when we are in our immaturity
Often people, usually our parents, have to take upon themselves
The cost of our harmful actions.
I imagine that at sometime during your childhood
You damaged property, either in your home or at school
Or at a friend's or relative's house, and it had to be replaced.
There was a cost, and it was born by your parents:
They repaired what you could not.

This is a very simple example of a much deeper reality:
As Jesus teaches in the Lord's prayer, we are all debtors
We all owe God and others because of our sin,
And we accrue a spiritual debt that we can't pay.
But the cross of Christ shows us that God,
Our loving heavenly Father, pays the debt,
That Jesus, or Lord, the one who taught us to pray,
'Forgive us our trespasses'
Stands in our place, and takes the punishment for sin and transgression
That we deserve, but that we are not able to bear.

And this takes us to the third point:
Through Jesus' vicarious suffering and death,
We have healing and peace from God.
Let's listen a third time to these words from Isaiah:

**He was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for *our* iniquities;
upon him was the punishment *that made us whole,*
and by his bruises *we are healed.***

In the church we talk about Christ's *atoning* sacrifice,
That, yes, Christ's death shows us the true nature of our sin,
And that his death pays the cost for our sin,
But that also that through his suffering and death
Our Lord Jesus Christ has gained for us
Peace with our Father in heaven,
And healing from the destructive effects of our sin:
Through the cross we are at one with God.

How Jesus' death achieves this goal is something
That Christian people have through the ages thought about
As they have listened to God's word and meditated on it,
But *that* Jesus' death achieves the goal of bringing us
Into a good relationship with God
This is something that the Scriptures simply proclaim.

But this is not of theoretical significance,
It is entirely practical and changes our lives here and now.

Look at what your Lord has done for you on the cross:
He has taken upon himself your sin and shame,
He has paid the cost that you could not pay,
He has opened the way for you to friendship with God,
More than this,
He has given you the freedom to live as a son, as a daughter,
Of the creator of all that there is.
Trust that this is so, and you will experience,
Without anyone needing to give you any lessons,
The freedom, the joy, and the peace that your Lord won for you
On that first, great, Good Friday.

Today's reading ends with these words:

**Therefore I will allot [the suffering servant] a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and *made intercession for the transgressors.***

Today is Good Friday,

But we are looking ahead to Easter Sunday.

We know that our Lord who died for us,

Also lives for us, and even now intercedes for us.

Listen to how St Paul puts this in Romans 8:

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The cross of Christ *does* make clear

What we could intuit about our natural spiritual state:
Our sins are indeed great, and the burden too heavy to bear,
But in Christ Jesus we have one who has taken our place,
Who has suffered the punishment, who has borne the cost,
And who brings us healing and peace with God.
And who, more than this, speaks up for us now before the Father.

So today, lets confess our sins,
Let's confess Christ as the Lamb of God,
Who takes away the sin of the world,
And let us confess that he is the Lord,
Now exalted at the right hand of the Father,
Where he makes intercession for us.
In Jesus' name. Amen.